Meeting Minutes from First CAG for Route 3 Connector

DATE OF MEETING: November 8, 2006, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

PROJECT: Illinois Route 3 Connector

MEETING LOCATION: Gateway National Golf Links

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Community Advisory Group Introductory Meeting

ATTENDEES:
Buddy Desai/CH2M HILL
Kevin Nichols/CH2M HILL
Libby Braband/CH2M HILL
Jeff Frantz/CH2M HILL
Dan Sommer/CH2M HILL
Brian Mueller/BLA
Brooks Brestal/IDOT
Karen Geldert/IDOT
CAG Members

The first Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting for the Illinois Route 3 Connector project was held November 8, 2006, 10:00 AM at Gateway National Golf Links. CH2M HILL led the meeting, with Buddy Desai as the main presenter. Kevin Nichols, Jeff Frantz and Libby Braband assisted during the presentation.

Each member of the CAG was provided a handout that included an agenda, study area map, explanation of CAG functions and process, and a copy of the presentation. A copy of this handout and the sign in sheet is attached to this document.

Attendance was approximately one-half of those that had agreed to participate. A list of the CAG invitees is attached for reference. Members that did not attend will be contacted by CH2M HILL, and will be provided the meeting handout and meeting minutes.

The meeting consisted of a presentation that provided project background, followed by a group exercise.

The presentation focused on a summary of the project, project challenges and critical success factors, roles & responsibilities, and information that the study team has gathered related to engineering and environmental issues.

Buddy Desai briefly discussed the history of the project and mentioned the 2004 Feasibility Study by IDOT for the Study Area. IDOT initiated the Feasibility Study to identify issues and alternatives for improving safety and mobility within the corridor. Buddy mentioned that the Illinois Route 3 Connector project will evaluate the previously identified alternatives as well as identify new alternatives for consideration.

After Buddy discussed the project history, he asked Kevin Nichols/Engineering Lead and Jeff Frantz/Environmental Lead to review the engineering and environmental information the project team has gathered to date.

Kevin Nichols presented the engineering constraints for the project. He noted that the Landsdowne Ditch and railroad lines owned by TRRA and CSX are two major issues that

affect possible alignments for a new roadway. Kevin also presented preliminary crash data for I-55/70 and Illinois Route 203. He noted that both routes have crash rates that are roughly two times the Illinois State average for similar roadways.

Jeff Frantz discussed the environmental constraints within the study area. Jeff noted that items of particular interest are natural resources, wetlands, and socio-economic resources. CH2M HILL has started the development of a GIS database that will organize all of this information and will continue to enhance this database throughout the project. Jeff will look to the CAG to help CH2M HILL better understand any environmental constraints in the Study Area. The most current data will be provided at the future CAG meetings for members to view and add information.

After Kevin and Jeff's presentation, Libby Braband and Buddy Desai guided the CAG through the completion of a Community Context Audit. The purpose of this form was to obtain general background information from each CAG participant on their perceptions of the various issues which exist within the study area.

As a follow-up to the Community Context Audit, Libby and Buddy lead a group exercise aimed at further defining the issues that affect the corridor. Members of the CAG were asked to openly discuss each question posed and develop a consensus answer that best illustrates the CAG's opinion.

The results are summarized below:

- Words to describe the Study Area: Developing, Throughway, Growing, Brownfield, Diverse, Multi-Use, Potential, Portions that are Economically Depressed
- Congestion on local roads is a problem in this area: Neutral
- Congestion on the interstate(s) is a problem in this area: Agree
- There are a lot of accidents in this area: Agree
- There is a need for an additional roadway in this area: Strongly Agree
- Redevelopment opportunities are hindered by a lack of highway access: Disagree
- Accommodating future development in this area is important: Agree
- This route would provide a more direct connection between neighboring communities and common destinations: Agree
- At-grade train crossings cause delays, congestion, and safety problems in this area: Strongly Agree
- Improved access to/from this area – for shopping, emergency response vehicles, social services, etc. – is important: Agree
- Pedestrian accommodations/pedestrian safety is an issue in this area: Agree
- Truck traffic on local streets is a concern: Neutral

Questions and general comments made by the CAG members were as follows:

1. One CAG member asked how current traffic volumes experienced on Illinois Route 203 compare to those prior to the closing of the McKinley Bridge. Several CAG participants indicated that they noticed an increase in traffic on Illinois Route 203 when the bridge was initially closed.

2. CAG participants stated that local residents and businesses utilize Illinois Route 3 as an option to avoid congestion on Illinois Route 203. During this discussion, it was noted that Illinois Route 3 can also be congested at times due to numerous stop lights and stop signs along this roadway. CAG participants indicated that free-flow traffic is rarely experienced on Illinois Route 3 in close proximity to the study area.

3. The CAG participants stated that there are not any particular points of concentration for accidents along Illinois Route 3 or Illinois Route 203.

4. It was noted that congestion on I-55/70 is believed to be due largely to accidents and some weaving issues. The CAG participants indicated that congestion problems on the interstate are not attributed to the existing number of lanes.

5. The CAG participants stated that this summer's (2006) congestion issues on I-55/70 were due to construction on the Poplar Street Bridge. During this construction project, traffic backed up into the Study Area quite frequently. It was noted that Madison County Transit was forced to suspend bus service to Missouri during this timeframe.

6. The CAG participants identified at-grade railroad crossings as being a major issue within the Study Area. One member noted that "nobody in Madison County will disagree that this is an issue." Another CAG member stated that he had to take alternative route to bypass a stopped train in route to this meeting.

7. The CAG participants indicated that there is a lack of existing east-west roadways connecting Illinois Route 3 to Illinois Route 203. Eagle Park Road is the only option in close proximity to the Study Area. Traveling north to the City of Venice is also an option but creates significant indirect travel time for the traveler. It was noted that both of these alternatives have at-grade railroad crossings. Brooks Brestal of IDOT indicated that Industrial Avenue served as an additional east-west connector in the area until it was closed several years ago. CAG participants noted that there was a disruption to east-west traffic flow and an increase in indirect travel when Industrial Avenue was closed.

8. The CAG members indicated that construction of a new roadway will likely encourage some development, which is viewed as a benefit to the area. The CAG agreed that the area is not hindered from attracting new development due to highway and interstate accessibility issues.

9. One CAG member questioned whether the project was intended to promote development within the Study Area. Brooks Brestal stated that the basic purpose for this project is to provide an alternative route for the area to improve safety, mobility, accessibility, and to allow more direct travel routes. Brooks further indicated that construction of a new connector roadway could promote economic development within the Study Area but that is not the primary purpose for the project.

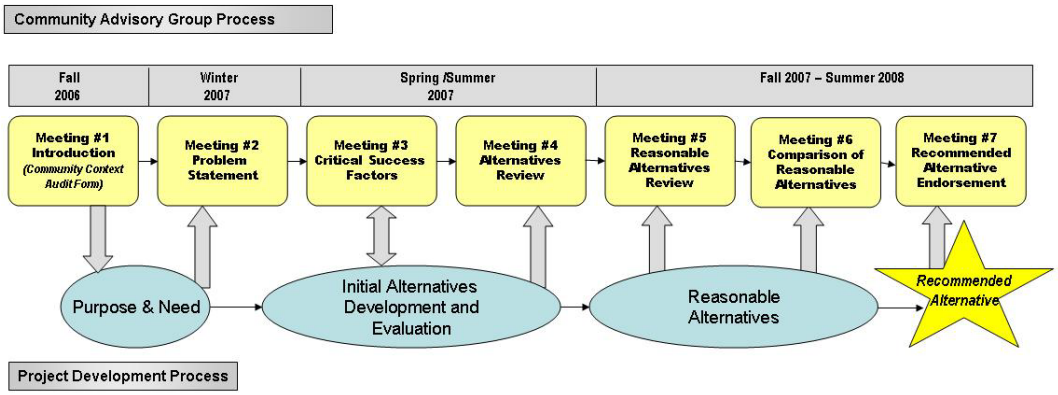
10. There were discussions on how much additional traffic would be generated by growth in the area. Buddy and Kevin indicated that future modeling will account for future land use and subsequent increases in traffic volumes.

11. It was noted that pedestrian activity in the Study Area is fairly limited due to lack of "destinations". However, one of the CAG members indicated that Pilot Truck Stop has inquired about bus service to assist employees that currently walk to work from the Collinsville Avenue area. A representative from Gateway International Raceway noted that they have employees that walk from the Emerson Park Metrolink Station. A representative from St. Clair County Transit indicated that bus service to the area existed at one time but it was dropped due to lack of rider ship.

12. A representative from Madison County Transit (MCT) indicated that their bike trail stops just north of the Study Area on Illinois Route 203. MCT does not feel this should be a driving force in the project, but asked that it be considered. It was noted that MCT's bike trail network consists of over 75 miles of inter-connected trails.

13. It was noted that there is a large amount of truck traffic in this area. CAG members did not feel negatively towards the large volumes of trucks. Many CAG members commented that the large trucks are a key part of the industries and businesses in the area. For the most part, the large trucks are believed to be traveling on the state highway system, and are not cutting through on local streets unless designated as a truck route (i.e. First Street).

When the group exercise was complete, Buddy Desai provided a brief overview of the next steps in the process. He reviewed the chart below which outlines the seven anticipated CAG meetings and the purpose of each of the meetings. He noted that the next meeting is anticipated to occur in early 2007 and that the CAG efforts should be completed in mid 2008.



Buddy Desai briefly discussed future meeting logistics and concluded the meeting. Members agreed that 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM was a suitable meeting time, and that evenings and weekends were not desirable. CAG Members were asked to provide

feedback via telephone or e-mail to Libby Braband on use of Gateway Golf Links' building facility for future meetings. Libby may be reached at 773-693-3809, x248.

The following action item was identified and will be addressed at CAG Meeting #2:

- IDOT agreed to provide a schedule update for the McKinley Bridge re-construction at the next CAG meeting.
- Crash information will be gathered for a three year period prior to the McKinley Bridge closing.

Handouts

A copy of the sign-in sheet is attached. Also attached is the handout each member of the CAG was provided which included an agenda, study area map, explanation of CAG functions and process, and a copy of the presentation.

Exhibits

Exhibits present at the meeting include a map showing engineering issues and environmental issues within the study area. There was also an exhibit that summarized the group exercise.

Illinois Route 3 Connector Project

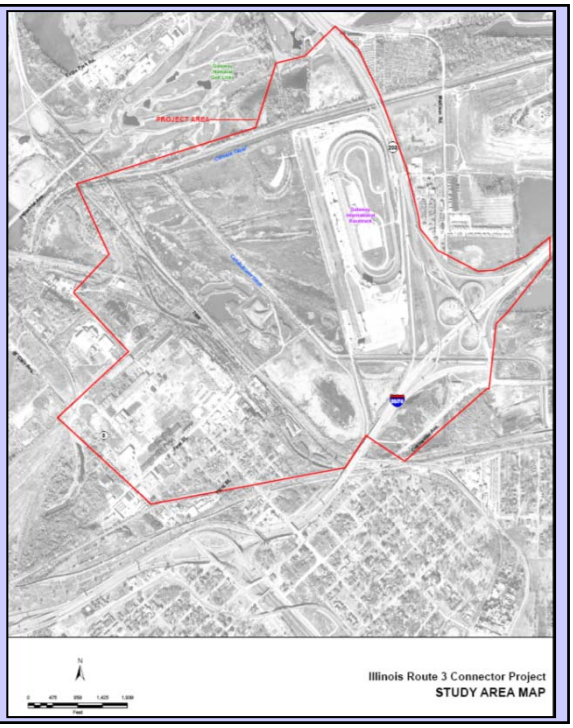
Community Advisory Group
Meeting #1
November 8, 2006

Meeting Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Summary
- Project Challenges / Critical Success Factors
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Project Issues Group Exercise
- Results of Group Exercise: Summary of Transportation Problems
- What's Next

Project Summary

The Illinois Route 3 Connector Project seeks to improve mobility, access and safety in the study area, and provide options to existing roads with heavy truck traffic or at-grade rail road crossings.



General Project Issues

- Truck traffic on neighborhood streets
- Safety issues from cut through traffic
- At-grade railroad crossings
- Emergency vehicle response times
- Access to services
- Accommodating future development

Project History

- IDOT initiated study to assess need for new roadway in area to reduce congestion and improve safety on I-55/I-70 and IL 203
- Examined 6 alternatives
- Results summarized in 2004 Feasibility Study

Project Process

- Clean slate: alternatives from 2004 study will be considered, but others will be evaluated as well
- Preliminary design of new connector roadway in the project area
- Applying IDOT's "Context Sensitive Solutions" policy to the project
  - Cost-effective transportation facilities
  - Balance mobility, community needs and the environment while focusing on safety
  - Involving stakeholders in project development early and continuously

Key Project Questions:

- What are the physical engineering requirements of the roadway?
  - Number of lanes, lane widths, sidewalks, etc.
- What are the social and/or environmental impacts of each proposed alternative?
  - Relocations, impact to businesses, wetlands, floodplains, endangered species, etc.
- Which solution best meets the needs of the stakeholders?

Project Challenges / Critical Success Factors

Critical Success Factors

- Identify and engage all stakeholders who have an interest in the project
- Involve all stakeholders in project development
- Understand roles/responsibilities
- Establish two-way communication throughout the project team
- Commit to effective conflict resolution
- Clearly communicate decisions to the general public

Project challenges to be addressed by the Community Advisory Group

- Commit to functioning as “whole” team
- Use a study approach designed to produce a consensus solution
  - Consensus is defined as “When a majority of the stakeholders agree on a particular issue, while the dissenting remainder of stakeholders agrees its input has been heard and duly considered and that the process as a whole was fair.”
- Develop solutions that minimize adverse effects on the environment

Roles & Responsibilities

Why has a Community Advisory Group been assembled?

- Guide development of a consensus solution for the Illinois Route 3 Connector Project
- Serve as a two-way communication link between project team and broader community
- Provide mechanism for key stakeholders to provide input to project

Community Advisory Group Membership

- City of Madison
- City of East St. Louis
- East St. Louis Chamber of Commerce
- SIU-Edwardsville – East St. Louis Campus
- Southern Mission Baptist Church
- Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House Family Development Center
- Gateway International Raceway
- Gateway National Golf Course
- St. Louis Auto Shredding
- Milam Landfill Waste Management
- Pilot Truck Stop
- East-West Gateway
- St. Clair County Transit
- Madison County Transit
- Emerson Park Development Corp.
- William Clark

Role of the CAG

- Communicate local issues related to the project study area
- Serve as communication link to broader population
- Review and provide input on project issues
- Actively participate in public involvement program

Other Roles/Responsibilities

- IDOT – Decision-making Authority
- BLA – IDOT's Project Management Consultant
- CH2M HILL – Design, Environmental, Public Involvement Consultant

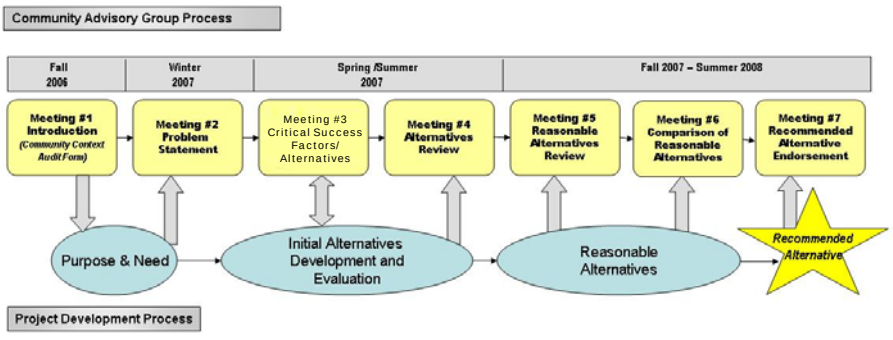
Project Corridor Review

- Engineering – Kevin Nichols
- Environmental – Jeff Frantz

Defining Project Issues – Group Exercise

What's Next?

Tentative Meeting Schedule



Next Steps

- Development of Problem Statement
- Development of project Purpose & Need
- Traffic Analyses
- Understanding Affected Environment
- Meeting #2 – Approximately January 2007